Decentarlisation of Procurement of Foodgrains

3845. SHRI SURESH PACHOURI: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have decentralised procurement of foodgrains and encouraged greater role by private traders;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) what has been response of the State Governments; and

(d) how Government propose to safeguard interests of the small and marginal farmers?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI ASHOK PRADHAN): (a) to (c) The Union Government has been persuading the States to adopt decentralized procurement of foodgrains. So, far the Government of Uttar Pradesh has adopted the scheme for procurement of wheat and rice, the Government of Madhya Pradesh for wheat and the Governments of West Bengal and Chhattisgarh for rice. A proposal was received from the State Government of Assam in the month of October 2001 expressing willingness to undertake decentralized procurement. Subsequently, the State Government informed that the scheme was yet to receive clearance from its Finance Department. The rest of the States, which were asked to take up the scheme of decentralized procurement, have not responded favourably to the scheme due to lack of infrastructure, shortage of funds and lack of trained and experienced manpower.

The Government docs not envisage any enhanced role for private traders in the procurement of foodgrains under this scheme. Traders/ millers are already free to buy wheat and paddy from the farmers at MSP.

(d) The rationale behind the scheme of decentralized procurement of foodgrains is to extend the benefit of MSP to each and every farmer in the country. The scheme will, therefor, benefit the small and marginal farmers.